

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 01576 152026Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 EB-07 DHA-02 ORM-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 /085 W

-----075720 152034Z /65

R 151400Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0231

INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 1576

E.9. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF BC RH ZA

SUBJ: CHARTER FLIGHTS AND REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA

REF: (A) GABORONE 1432, (B) GABORONE 1536

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCE, AIRPLANES WHICH HAVE BEEN CHARTERING RHODESIAN GUERRILLAS FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA, AND WHICH HAVE CAUSED RECENT FUROR IN SOUTH AFRICAN AND RHODESIAN PRESS, ARE RHODESIAN-OWNED. END SUMMARY.

2. AT SMALL FAREWELL FUNCTION AT RESIDENCE JULY 13, DEPARTING AMCIT DIRECTOR OF BOTSWANA DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, RALPH STEVENS, WITH SEVERAL RANKING GOB OFFICIALS NODDING AGREEMENT, TOLD US "ON CONFIDENTIAL BASIS" THAT AFFAIR OF SO-CALLED "MYSTERY PLANES" FLYING RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA FOR GUERRILLA TRAINING WAS FRAUGHT WITH "IRONY". IN TRUTH, THE PLANES (THERE ARE TWO VISCOUNTS, ONE ONE) ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 GABORO 01576 152026Z

OWNED BY A RHODESIAN FINANCE COMPANY AND SERVICED AT SALISBURY. HOWEVER, A COMPLICATED SYSTEM OF LEASING ARRANGEMENTS INVOLVING EIGHT PARTIES EXISTED TO COVER UP THIS RHODESIAN CONNECTION. (LINKS LEAD FROM THE RHODESIAN OWNER THROUGH "AVIATION HIRE AND TRADERS" OF JOHANNESBURG TO AIR SERVICES BOTSWANA.) THE ORIGINAL CONCERN IN THE ARRANGEMENT WAS NOT THAT THE RHODESIANS OR THE SOUTH AFRICANS WOULD BE EMBARRASSED BY

REVELATIONS, SUCH AS THOSE MADE IN REIENT RAND DAILY MAIL ARTICLES (ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY ARE EMBARRASSED), BUT THAT THE ZAMBIANS WOULD BE OFFENDED BY DEPENDENCE ON RHODESIAN-OWNED AIRCRAFT IN MAKING THE REFUGEE RUN TO LUSAKA AND WOULD HALT THE FLIGHTS.

3. STEVENS THOUGHT THE RAND DAILY MAIL "EXPOSURES" WOULD RESULT IN DISCONTINUANCE OF THE FLIGHTS INASMUCH AS SALISBURY, THE ONLY SERVICING POINT FOR VISCOUNTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WOULD NOT FIND IT POLITICALLY FEASIBLE TO PROVIDE PLANES (AND SERVICES) FOR SUCH PURPOSES.

4. STEVENS DID NOT SUGGEST ALTERNATIVE MEASURES WHICH MIGHT BE TAKEN TO MAINTAIN THE REFUGEE AIR LINK BETWEEN SELEBI-PIKWE AND LUSAKA. NEVERTHELESS, HE CONSIDERED THE MATTER LESS PRESSING NOW SINCE THE NUMBER OF ZIMBABWEAN REFUGEES HAD DECLINED IN PAST WEEKS AND BOTSWANA REFUGEE CAMPS WERE NO LONGER CROWDED. HE SPECULATED THAT THE DECLINE OF REFUGEE INFLOWS WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT ZAMBIAN CAMPS AND OTHER REFUGEE FACILITIES WERE FULL AND THAT WOULD-BE FREEDOM FIGHTERS WERE BEING INSTRUCTED BY PATRIOTIC FRONT RECRUITERS TO STAY IN RHODESIA.

5. COMMENT: AS OF JULY 15, FLIGHTS BY RHODESIAN-OWNED AIRCRAFT CARRYING RHODESIAN REFUGEES FROM BOTSWANA TO ZAMBIA WERE STILL OPERATING, A POINT CONFIRMED BY GOB AND UNHCR REP PERKINS.  
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PAGE 03 GABORO 01576 152026Z

OFFICIAL AT PRESIDENCY ADDED THAT MOST RECENT FLIGHT WAS JULY 11. HE SAID NUMBERS OF REFUGEES WERE BUILDING UP AGAIN IN RECENT DAYS, ALTHOUGH STILL AT RELATIVELY LOW LEVELS, I.E., AS OF JULY 14, NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN FRANCISTOWN WAS 627; SELEBI-PIKWE 606, WITH GABORONE CONSTANT AT 1000 TO 1200.  
NORLAND

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NNN

## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
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